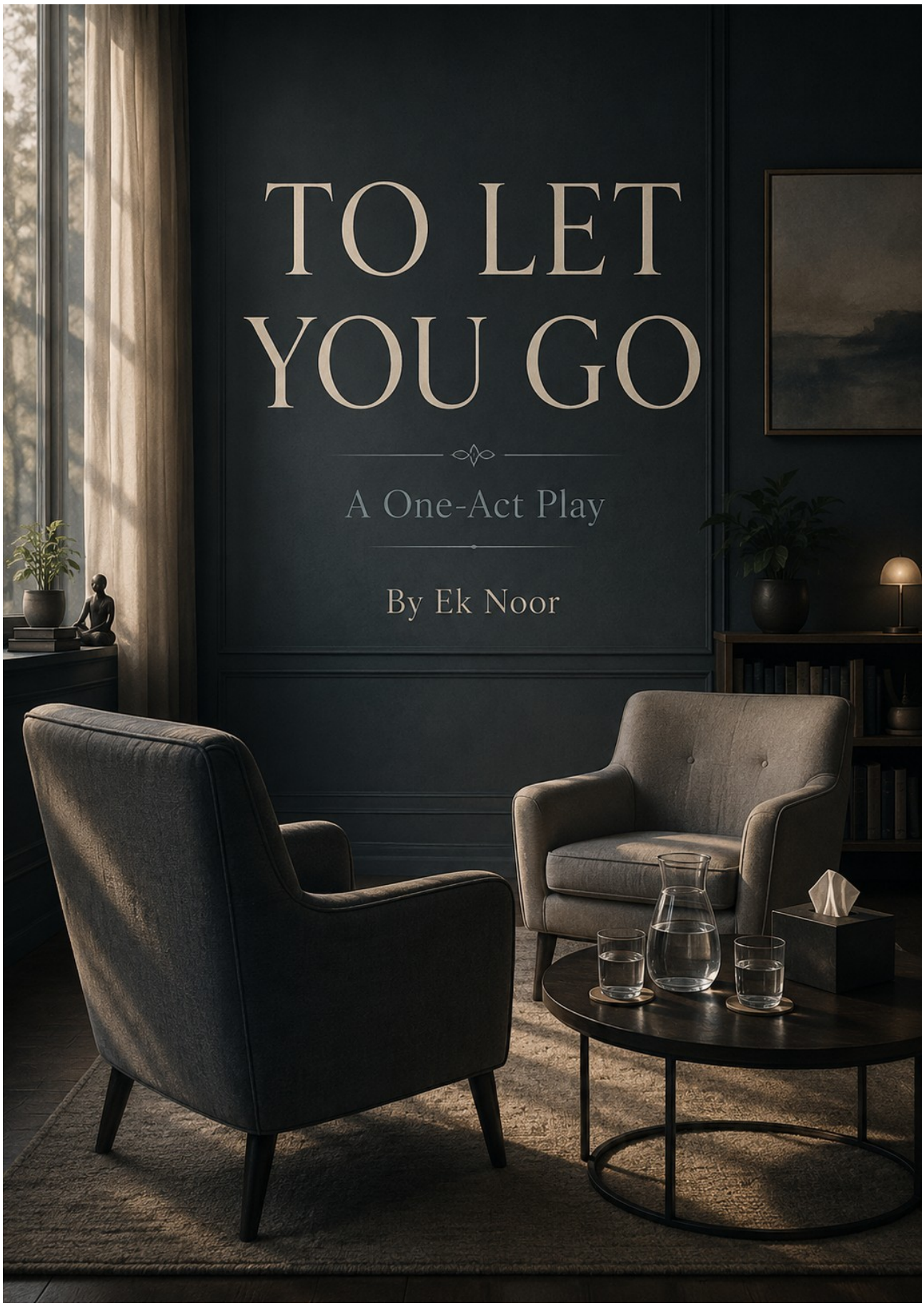
TO LET YOU GO
A One-Act Play
By Ek Noor

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Character List:

RAJ GUPTA: 44. A British Punjabi GP, married for fourteen years with two children. Pressured into marriage by his parents, he has long felt trapped by the life he accepted. When he becomes obsessed with an older married patient, he is forced to confront love, choice, responsibility and letting go.

DANIEL VALE: Late 50s or early 60s. A calm, philosophical psychotherapist. He helps RAJ question his assumptions about love and possession, guiding him towards the idea that to love someone may mean allowing them to live freely.

SETTING: A therapy room. With two comfortable chairs. A small table. A glass jug of water and two glasses.

SCENE ONE

The therapy room.

Two comfortable chairs angled towards one another. A small table. A glass jug of water and two glasses.

***DANIEL VALE** sits in one chair. **RAJ GUPTA**, 44, sits opposite him. Smartly dressed, composed. The kind of man accustomed to other people coming to him with their problems.*

A silence.

DANIEL: What brought you here?

RAJ: I don't know where to start.

DANIEL: Anywhere.

RAJ: That's not very helpful.

DANIEL: We've only just met. Give me time.

*(**RAJ** smiles despite himself.)*

RAJ: I thought therapists asked lots of questions.

DANIEL: Some do.

RAJ: And you?

DANIEL: I prefer answers.

RAJ: Very funny.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: You came.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: So something matters enough for you to be here.

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: I've met someone.

DANIEL: I see.

RAJ: That's it?

DANIEL: You've only given me three words.

RAJ: Four.

DANIEL: You're a doctor, aren't you?

RAJ: GP.

DANIEL: Then you'll understand the danger of diagnosing too early.

(RAJ gives a small laugh.)

RAJ: She's extraordinary.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: No, I mean genuinely extraordinary.

DANIEL: I believed you the first time.

RAJ: She's intelligent. Accomplished. Very... composed.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Beautiful.

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: What does "ah" mean?

DANIEL: It means beautiful finally arrived.

RAJ: I didn't want you to think it was just that.

DANIEL: Why would it matter what I think?

*(**RAJ** considers this.)*

RAJ: She's ten years older than me.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: I'm forty-four.

DANIEL: That makes her fifty-four.

RAJ: I can count.

DANIEL: Useful in medicine.

RAJ: You're not what I expected.

DANIEL: Neither are most people.

(A small silence.)

RAJ: She has this way about her.

DANIEL: What way?

RAJ: She's comfortable with herself.

DANIEL: That's unusual?

RAJ: More than you might think.

DANIEL: For women?

RAJ: For anyone.

*(**RAJ** shifts forward.)*

RAJ: She is of Punjabi heritage. Born here. Educated. Successful. She doesn't seem to need anyone's approval.

DANIEL: You admire that.

RAJ: Very much.

DANIEL: Do you need people's approval?

RAJ: We're talking about her.

DANIEL: Are we?

*(**RAJ** studies him.)*

RAJ: Her husband is French.

DANIEL: She's married.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Happily?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: Does she say she isn't?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Does she speak badly of him?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Has she told you she wants to leave him?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then why did you tell me he's French?

*(**RAJ** hesitates.)*

RAJ: It's relevant.

DANIEL: To what?

RAJ: To understanding her.

DANIEL: Does being married to a Frenchman explain her?

RAJ: That's not what I meant.

DANIEL: What did you mean?

(A pause.)

RAJ: She made her own choice.

*(**DANIEL** watches him.)*

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: There's that "ah" again.

DANIEL: This one means something different.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: We'll see.

*(**RAJ** sits back.)*

RAJ: They have two children. Both at university.

DANIEL: You know quite a lot about her.

RAJ: We've talked.

DANIEL: How long have you known her?

RAJ: A few months.

DANIEL: And how much time have you actually spent together?

RAJ: That's difficult to answer.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because it's not about time.

DANIEL: What is it about?

RAJ: Recognition.

DANIEL: Recognition?

RAJ: Have you never met somebody and just...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Just?

RAJ: Known.

DANIEL: Known what?

RAJ: That they fit.

DANIEL: Fit where?

RAJ: In your life.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: Does she know she fits in yours?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Does she know you feel this way?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: So at the moment she fits in a life she doesn't know she's part of.

*(**RAJ** stiffens.)*

RAJ: You're making it sound ridiculous.

DANIEL: Am I?

RAJ: I haven't done anything wrong.

DANIEL: I didn't say you had.

RAJ: I know what this sounds like.

DANIEL: What does it sound like?

RAJ: Middle-aged man. Married. Bored. Attractive woman appears. Suddenly he thinks he's in love.

DANIEL: Is that what happened?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Good. We can discard it.

RAJ: You believe me?

DANIEL: I don't need to believe or disbelieve you.

RAJ: Then what are we doing?

DANIEL: Trying to understand what you're experiencing.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I'm not bored.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: And I'm not having some crisis because I'm forty-four.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: My marriage has never been right.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: Fourteen years.

DANIEL: Children?

RAJ: Two. My daughter's twelve. My son's ten.

DANIEL: And your wife?

RAJ: She's a nurse.

DANIEL: That wasn't quite what I meant.

RAJ: I know.

(A pause.)

RAJ: She's a good person.

DANIEL: You say that as though it's unfortunate.

RAJ: It's complicated.

DANIEL: Most good people are.

RAJ: I never loved her.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: Never?

RAJ: Not the way a man should love his wife.

DANIEL: How should a man love his wife?

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I'm hoping you do.

*(**RAJ** becomes irritated.)*

RAJ: My parents wanted me married.

DANIEL: And you didn't?

RAJ: I was twenty-eight when it started. Twenty-nine when it became unbearable.

DANIEL: What did?

RAJ: The questions. The introductions. The photographs. Every wedding becoming an opportunity for somebody to point out somebody's daughter.

DANIEL: And eventually?

RAJ: Family friends introduced us.

DANIEL: Your wife?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And you married her.

RAJ: My parents pressured me.

DANIEL: We'll come back to that.

RAJ: Why?

DANIEL: Because you changed the sentence.

RAJ: What sentence?

DANIEL: You said, "I married her." Then you said, "My parents pressured me."

RAJ: Both are true.

DANIEL: I'm sure they are.

(A pause.)

RAJ: We live with my parents.

DANIEL: Still?

RAJ: It's a large house.

DANIEL: That wasn't a criticism.

RAJ: People hear "extended family" and immediately...

DANIEL: I heard "large house."

*(**RAJ** stops.)*

DANIEL: You seem very used to defending your life.

RAJ: Maybe I am.

DANIEL: From whom?

*(**RAJ** doesn't answer.)*

DANIEL: So this woman appears...

RAJ: And suddenly I understood.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: What was missing.

DANIEL: From your marriage?

RAJ: From me.

(That lands differently.)

RAJ: I can talk to her.

DANIEL: About what?

RAJ: Anything.

DANIEL: What does she talk to you about?

(A pause.)

RAJ: Her health.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: Obviously not only that.

DANIEL: Obviously.

RAJ: We've had conversations.

DANIEL: Outside work?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Socially?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: You've had coffee?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Dinner?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: You've met her family?

RAJ: No.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: You're doing it again.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: Making it sound...

DANIEL: I'm asking where the two of you meet.

(A silence.)

RAJ: At the surgery.

DANIEL: You work together?

RAJ: No.

(Another silence.)

DANIEL: **RAJ**...

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: She's my patient.

(A long silence.)

*(**DANIEL** does not react with shock or judgement.)*

RAJ: Say something.

DANIEL: You seem to know what you expect me to say.

RAJ: That it's inappropriate.

DANIEL: Is it?

RAJ: I'm her doctor.

DANIEL: That's a fact.

RAJ: You think I don't know that?

DANIEL: I think knowing something and accepting it are often very different things.

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: I haven't touched her.

DANIEL: I didn't ask.

RAJ: I haven't said anything to her.

DANIEL: I didn't ask that either.

RAJ: I've been completely professional.

DANIEL: Then why are you here?

*(**RAJ** opens his mouth, but nothing comes.)*

(A long silence.)

RAJ: Because I can't stop thinking about her.

*(**DANIEL** nods gently.)*

DANIEL: Now we have somewhere to start.

Lights fade.

Blackout

SCENE TWO

The therapy room.

Some days later.

***RAJ** sits with a glass of water in his hand. He has not drunk from it. **DANIEL** watches him without appearing to watch him.*

RAJ: I nearly didn't come back.

DANIEL: What changed your mind?

RAJ: I paid in advance.

DANIEL: A powerful therapeutic technique.

*(**RAJ** smiles.)*

RAJ: You made me feel like some sort of...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Some sort of what?

RAJ: Man having an affair in his head.

DANIEL: Did I say that?

RAJ: You didn't have to.

DANIEL: Then perhaps you said it.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I told you, nothing has happened.

DANIEL: I remember.

RAJ: I've never behaved improperly with her.

DANIEL: I remember that too.

RAJ: But you keep looking at me as though...

DANIEL: **RAJ**.

*(**RAJ** stops.)*

DANIEL: How am I looking at you?

RAJ: Like that.

DANIEL: Very helpful.

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I don't.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Perhaps you're trying to work out whether I approve of you.

RAJ: I don't care whether you approve of me.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: I don't.

DANIEL: Even better.

*(**RAJ** looks at him, mildly irritated.)*

RAJ: Can we talk seriously?

DANIEL: I thought we were.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I want you to understand something.

DANIEL: Go on.

RAJ: This didn't start because I was looking for another woman.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: I wasn't on dating sites. I wasn't flirting with women. I wasn't going out looking for excitement.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: I had accepted my life.

DANIEL: Accepted?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Interesting word.

RAJ: Why?

DANIEL: People usually say they're living their life.

(A silence.)

RAJ: You pick at everything.

DANIEL: Only the things you give me.

RAJ: Fine.

*(**RAJ** puts the glass down.)*

RAJ: I was functioning.

DANIEL: Better?

RAJ: No.

(A beat.)

RAJ: Probably worse.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: I got up. Went to work. Came home. Ate with the family. Helped the children with homework. Watched television. Went to bed.

DANIEL: With your wife?

RAJ: Usually.

DANIEL: Usually?

RAJ: Sometimes she's on nights.

DANIEL: She's still working as a nurse?

RAJ: Of course.

DANIEL: Full-time?

RAJ: Three long shifts most weeks. Sometimes extra.

DANIEL: And your parents live with you.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Whose idea was that?

RAJ: It wasn't an idea. It's what we do.

DANIEL: Who is "we"?

RAJ: Families like mine.

DANIEL: Your families?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: All of them?

RAJ: Obviously not all.

DANIEL: Then it was a choice.

RAJ: Here we go.

DANIEL: Where?

RAJ: Everything is a choice with you.

DANIEL: Not everything.

RAJ: You don't understand how families work.

DANIEL: Tell me.

*(**RAJ** exhales.)*

RAJ: My parents came here with nothing.

DANIEL: From India?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: How old were they?

RAJ: My father was twenty-one. My mother was nineteen.

DANIEL: And they built a life here.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And you became a doctor.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Were they proud?

RAJ: Very.

(A small pause.)

RAJ: My father still tells people.

DANIEL: What does he tell them?

RAJ: That his son is a doctor.

DANIEL: Not your name?

*(**RAJ** smiles.)*

RAJ: Sometimes I think "doctor" is my name.

DANIEL: And when did they start asking Doctor to get married?

RAJ: Long before I wanted to.

DANIEL: How old were you?

RAJ: Twenty-seven.

DANIEL: You said last time it became unbearable at twenty-nine.

RAJ: It did.

DANIEL: What changed?

RAJ: Everything became urgent.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I was nearly thirty.

DANIEL: What happens at thirty?

RAJ: Apparently your organs stop working and no woman will have you.

DANIEL: That's unfortunate.

RAJ: You laugh. They believed it.

DANIEL: Did you?

RAJ: No.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Then why did you marry?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: I told you.

DANIEL: Tell me again.

RAJ: My parents pressured me.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: Introductions. Phone calls. Photographs.

DANIEL: That sounds irritating.

RAJ: It was more than irritating.

DANIEL: What else?

RAJ: My mother would cry.

DANIEL: About you being unmarried?

RAJ: About everything it meant.

DANIEL: What did it mean?

RAJ: That she had failed.

DANIEL: As a mother?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Because her twenty-nine-year-old son wasn't married?

RAJ: You say it like that because you weren't there.

DANIEL: I'm asking you to take me there.

*(**RAJ** looks down.)*

RAJ: She'd say she couldn't sleep.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Worrying about me.

DANIEL: Were you all right?

RAJ: Perfectly.

DANIEL: Then what was she worried about?

RAJ: That I'd end up alone. That people would ask questions. That something must be wrong with me.

DANIEL: Was something wrong with you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did she think there was?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: But she feared other people might.

RAJ: Yes.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Other people seem rather crowded into this room.

RAJ: That's our culture.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: There's no "perhaps."

DANIEL: Culture can explain behaviour.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: It doesn't necessarily make every behaviour inevitable.

*(**RAJ** leans back.)*

RAJ: My father was worse.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: He didn't cry.

DANIEL: What did he do?

RAJ: He'd stop speaking to me.

DANIEL: For how long?

RAJ: Days sometimes.

DANIEL: And then?

RAJ: My mother would come upstairs and say, "Look what you're doing to your father."

DANIEL: What were you doing?

RAJ: Not getting married.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: And how did that feel?

RAJ: Like I was destroying the family.

DANIEL: Were you?

RAJ: Of course not.

DANIEL: You know that now.

RAJ: I knew it then.

DANIEL: Did you?

*(**RAJ** doesn't answer.)*

RAJ: You have to understand. It wasn't one conversation.

DANIEL: I understand.

RAJ: Every day.

DANIEL: I believe you.

RAJ: Every bloody day.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Then my aunt knew someone.

DANIEL: Your wife's family?

RAJ: Family friends of family friends.

DANIEL: And you met her.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: What did you think?

*(**RAJ** hesitates.)*

RAJ: She was nice.

DANIEL: Nice.

RAJ: Don't do that.

DANIEL: Do what?

RAJ: Make the word sound inadequate.

DANIEL: You chose it.

RAJ: She was kind. Quiet. Sensible.

DANIEL: Attractive?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Did you enjoy talking to her?

RAJ: It was fine.

DANIEL: Fine.

RAJ: For God's sake.

DANIEL: I'm listening to you, **RAJ**.

(A pause.)

RAJ: There wasn't anything wrong with her.

DANIEL: You've said that before.

RAJ: Because there wasn't.

DANIEL: Was there anything right?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: What does that mean?

DANIEL: Something that made you think, "I want to spend my life with this person."

(A long silence.)

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did you tell her?

RAJ: Tell her what?

DANIEL: That you didn't want to marry her.

RAJ: I didn't know that I didn't.

DANIEL: That's different.

RAJ: I knew I wasn't in love.

DANIEL: Did she know?

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: We barely knew each other.

DANIEL: That doesn't answer the question.

RAJ: No.

(A pause.)

RAJ: She didn't know.

DANIEL: What did she think?

RAJ: That I wanted the marriage.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I said yes.

(Silence.)

*(**RAJ** hears it.)*

RAJ: There. That's what you wanted.

DANIEL: What did I want?

RAJ: For me to admit it was my fault.

DANIEL: I haven't used the word fault.

RAJ: You're leading me there.

DANIEL: No.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: I'm leading you towards your part in your own life.

RAJ: Same thing.

DANIEL: Not at all.

*(**RAJ** stands abruptly and walks a few steps away.)*

RAJ: You weren't there.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: You don't know what it's like when your parents have sacrificed everything for you.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: When your father works every hour God sends so you can go to university.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: When your mother spends her whole life telling you that everything she does is for you.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Then one day they ask for one thing.

*(**DANIEL** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: Your life?

*(**RAJ** freezes.)*

(A long silence.)

RAJ: That's unfair.

DANIEL: Is it?

RAJ: They didn't ask for my life.

DANIEL: Then what did they ask for?

RAJ: They wanted me settled.

DANIEL: Were you?

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: Settled.

RAJ: I married. We had children. Bought the house.

DANIEL: That's what you did.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: I'm asking how you felt.

*(**RAJ** returns to his chair.)*

RAJ: I stopped fighting.

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: Don't.

DANIEL: Sorry.

*(Despite himself, **RAJ** laughs briefly.)*

RAJ: You really are irritating.

DANIEL: So I'm told.

(A quieter silence.)

RAJ: My wife moved into my parents' house after we married.

DANIEL: How did she feel about that?

RAJ: She knew what she was marrying into.

DANIEL: Did she?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Did you?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: What's that supposed to mean?

DANIEL: You keep describing yourself as the person things happened to.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Your parents pressured you.

Your aunt introduced you.

Your wife moved in.

Children arrived.

The house was bought.

RAJ: That's how life happens.

DANIEL: Sometimes.

RAJ: What do you want me to say?

DANIEL: Nothing in particular.

RAJ: You want me to say I chose it.

DANIEL: Did you?

RAJ: I gave in.

DANIEL: That's a choice.

RAJ: No, it isn't.

DANIEL: What is it?

RAJ: Surrender.

DANIEL: Who surrendered?

*(**RAJ** stares at him.)*

RAJ: Me.

(A long pause.)

DANIEL: That's important.

RAJ: Why?

DANIEL: Because if your parents made every choice, then you're still waiting for somebody else to make the next one.

RAJ: I'm not.

DANIEL: Aren't you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: What are you hoping this woman will do?

(RAJ says nothing.)

DANIEL: Choose you?

RAJ: Maybe.

DANIEL: And then?

RAJ: Everything changes.

DANIEL: Without you having to choose?

*(**RAJ** looks at him sharply.)*

RAJ: That's not fair.

DANIEL: Probably not.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: But is it true?

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: I just want to know what it feels like.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: To choose someone because you want them.

(A beat.)

RAJ: And for them to choose you.

*(**DANIEL**'s voice softens.)*

DANIEL: That sounds very different from what you've been saying.

RAJ: How?

DANIEL: Until now, you've been talking about the woman.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Perhaps you're also grieving the man you never allowed yourself to be.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

(For once, there is no irritation.)

RAJ: I was twenty-nine.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: What was I supposed to do?

DANIEL: I don't know.

RAJ: Say no?

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: And break my mother's heart?

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: Lose my father?

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: Destroy everything?

DANIEL: Perhaps.

(RAJ shakes his head.)

RAJ: You make it sound easy.

DANIEL: No.

(A long silence.)

DANIEL: I think it may have been terribly difficult.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: But difficult and impossible aren't the same thing.

*(**RAJ** absorbs this.)*

RAJ: So this is what therapy is?

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: Finding out that the person you've blamed for fourteen years wasn't entirely responsible.

DANIEL: That sounds unpleasant.

RAJ: It is.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: Good?

DANIEL: If you had no choice then...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**you still don't.

(RAJ looks at him.)

DANIEL: But if you did have a choice…

(A longer pause.)

DANIEL: ...perhaps you have one now.

*(**RAJ** sits very still.)*

Lights fade.

Blackout

SCENE THREE

The therapy room.

Another session.

***RAJ** is already seated. He seems restless today. **DANIEL** pours himself some water.*

RAJ: I found out more about her.

*(**DANIEL** puts the jug down.)*

DANIEL: More?

RAJ: About her life.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I wanted to understand her.

DANIEL: You could ask her.

RAJ: I can't exactly sit there during an appointment and say, "Tell me everything about yourself."

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: So I made some enquiries.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: What sort of enquiries?

RAJ: Nothing sinister.

DANIEL: I didn't say sinister.

RAJ: I know how it sounds.

DANIEL: You haven't told me yet.

*(**RAJ** shifts in his chair.)*

RAJ: Our communities are connected.

DANIEL: So you've told me.

RAJ: Somebody always knows somebody.

DANIEL: And somebody knew her?

RAJ: Not directly.

DANIEL: Indirectly?

RAJ: Her family.

DANIEL: What did you want to know?

RAJ: Just basic things.

DANIEL: Such as?

RAJ: Where she grew up.

Where she studied.

Who her parents were.

Her husband's background.

Her children.

DANIEL: You already knew she had children.

RAJ: Not where they were studying.

DANIEL: Why did you need to know that?

RAJ: I didn't need to.

DANIEL: Then why find out?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: Because I'm interested in her.

DANIEL: Interested people normally ask questions.

RAJ: I can't.

DANIEL: So you ask other people.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Without her knowing.

RAJ: Yes.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: What else?

RAJ: Her husband is a consultant.

He works in cardiology.

DANIEL: Does that matter?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: But you found out.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: His name?

RAJ: Of course.

DANIEL: Where he trained?

*(**RAJ** hesitates.)*

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Where they live?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: Yes.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: It's public information.

DANIEL: Some of it may be.

RAJ: Exactly.

DANIEL: That doesn't answer why you wanted it.

RAJ: You keep making this sound worse than it is.

DANIEL: I haven't described it at all.

RAJ: Your silence does.

DANIEL: That's a lot of responsibility for a silence.

*(**RAJ** exhales sharply.)*

RAJ: I needed to know whether I'd imagined her.

DANIEL: Imagined her?

RAJ: Not literally.

DANIEL: I hoped not.

RAJ: I mean whether I had built her up in my head.

DANIEL: And gathering information would tell you that?

RAJ: It would tell me who she really was.

DANIEL: Would it?

RAJ: Of course.

DANIEL: If I gave you my CV, my address, my school records and the names of my relatives...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**would you know me?

RAJ: That's different.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I've spoken to her.

DANIEL: As her doctor.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And everything else you've learned has come from people who aren't her.

RAJ: Mostly.

DANIEL: Mostly?

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

DANIEL: **RAJ.**

(A pause.)

RAJ: I hired someone.

DANIEL: Someone?

RAJ: A private investigator.

(Silence.)

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Don't look at me like that.

DANIEL: How am I looking at you?

RAJ: As if I've completely lost my mind.

DANIEL: Have you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then tell me why.

*(**RAJ** leans forward.)*

RAJ: I needed certainty.

DANIEL: About what?

RAJ: About her marriage.

DANIEL: What about it?

RAJ: Whether she was happy.

DANIEL: Did she tell you she wasn't?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did she tell you there were problems?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did she ever suggest she wanted to leave?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: So where did the idea come from?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: Try.

RAJ: Nobody's marriage is perfect.

DANIEL: That isn't the same as wanting to leave it.

RAJ: I know.

DANIEL: Do you?

RAJ: Yes.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: I thought maybe there was something I didn't know.

DANIEL: There is always something you don't know.

RAJ: Exactly.

DANIEL: That wasn't encouragement.

*(**RAJ** looks irritated.)*

RAJ: The investigator didn't follow her around with a camera.

DANIEL: What did he do?

RAJ: Checked things.

DANIEL: What things?

RAJ: Background. Property. Business interests. Social connections.

DANIEL: Her husband?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: The children?

RAJ: Only basic information.

DANIEL: They're not part of this.

RAJ: They're part of her life.

DANIEL: Exactly.

(A silence.)

RAJ: I know what you're trying to say.

DANIEL: What am I trying to say?

RAJ: That I've crossed a line.

DANIEL: Have you?

*(**RAJ** says nothing.)*

DANIEL: I don't need to tell you where the professional line is.

RAJ: I'm a doctor. I know.

DANIEL: Then let's talk about the other one.

RAJ: What other one?

DANIEL: The line between wanting to know someone and believing you're entitled to know them.

*(**RAJ** sits back.)*

RAJ: Entitled?

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: I don't feel entitled to her.

DANIEL: You feel entitled to information about her.

RAJ: That's not the same thing.

DANIEL: Perhaps not.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: How much does she know about you?

RAJ: She knows I'm married.

DANIEL: Did you tell her?

RAJ: She saw my wedding ring.

DANIEL: Anything else?

RAJ: That I have children.

DANIEL: Did she ask?

RAJ: Once.

DANIEL: Does she know where they go to school?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Your wife's name?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Where your wife works?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Where your parents were born?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: What university you attended?

RAJ: Possibly.

DANIEL: Your house?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Your family network?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Your marriage?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Your feelings for her?

RAJ: No.

(A long silence.)

DANIEL: So you know all of this about her.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: And she knows almost nothing about you.

RAJ: I'm her doctor.

(Silence.)

*(**RAJ** hears the words as he says them.)*

DANIEL: Yes.

*(**RAJ** looks down.)*

RAJ: It sounds bad when you put it like that.

DANIEL: You put it like that.

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I do.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I haven't harmed her.

DANIEL: Does she know this has happened?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then neither of us can know how she would feel about it.

RAJ: She'll never know.

DANIEL: Does that make it all right?

RAJ: I'm not saying that.

DANIEL: What are you saying?

RAJ: I don't know any more.

(He rubs his face.)

RAJ: This isn't who I am.

DANIEL: Who are you?

RAJ: I'm a decent man.

DANIEL: I haven't said otherwise.

RAJ: Good husband. Good father. Good son. Good doctor.

DANIEL: You sound as though you're giving me references.

RAJ: I'm trying to explain.

DANIEL: Perhaps you're trying to reassure yourself.

RAJ: What's wrong with knowing you're a good person?

DANIEL: Nothing.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Until being a good person becomes evidence that everything you do must therefore be good.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: That's clever.

DANIEL: It's actually rather inconvenient.

(A silence.)

RAJ: Do you think I'm obsessed?

DANIEL: Do you?

RAJ: I think about her every day.

DANIEL: How often?

RAJ: A lot.

DANIEL: At work?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: At home?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: With your children?

RAJ: Sometimes.

DANIEL: With your wife?

*(**RAJ** doesn't answer.)*

DANIEL: **RAJ**?

RAJ: Yes.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Sometimes when my wife is talking to me, I'm thinking about her.

DANIEL: And how does that feel?

RAJ: At the time?

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Good.

(A beat.)

RAJ: Then afterwards, awful.

DANIEL: Why good?

RAJ: Because for a few seconds I'm somewhere else.

DANIEL: Where?

*(**RAJ** smiles faintly.)*

RAJ: With her.

DANIEL: Doing what?

RAJ: Nothing extraordinary.

Having dinner.

Talking.

Walking somewhere.

Sitting together.

DANIEL: You've never done any of those things with her.

RAJ: I know.

DANIEL: So whose company are you enjoying?

*(**RAJ** looks confused.)*

RAJ: Hers.

DANIEL: Is it?

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Or yours?

RAJ: What does that mean?

DANIEL: The woman in those scenes says what you imagine she'll say.

She laughs when you imagine she'll laugh.

She understands you because you imagine that she does.

She chooses you because...

*(**DANIEL** stops.)*

RAJ: Because what?

DANIEL: Because it's your imagination.

*(**RAJ** becomes defensive.)*

RAJ: So none of it is real?

DANIEL: Your feelings are real.

RAJ: But she isn't?

DANIEL: She's very real.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Which may be precisely the problem.

RAJ: I don't understand.

DANIEL: The woman you're thinking about all day is partly someone you've created.

RAJ: You haven't met her.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Then you can't say that.

DANIEL: Neither can you say she's exactly as you imagine.

RAJ: I know enough.

DANIEL: You know facts.

RAJ: And I've spoken to her.

DANIEL: As her doctor.

RAJ: Stop saying that.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because you're reducing everything to that.

DANIEL: Perhaps you're trying to enlarge it into something else.

(A silence.)

RAJ: She understands me.

DANIEL: Has she said that?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Has she seen you frightened?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Angry?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Jealous?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: With your parents?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: With your wife?

RAJ: Of course not.

DANIEL: Has she seen you fail?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Has she disappointed you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Has she disagreed with you?

RAJ: Not really.

DANIEL: Then perhaps she hasn't had the opportunity to be human yet.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

(A long silence.)

RAJ: You think I'm in love with a fantasy.

DANIEL: I'm asking whether you know the difference.

RAJ: I know what I feel.

DANIEL: I'm sure you do.

RAJ: Then why can't that be enough?

DANIEL: Enough for what?

RAJ: To know.

DANIEL: Know what?

RAJ: That she's right for me.

*(**DANIEL** leans back.)*

DANIEL: There's an interesting word.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: "Right."

RAJ: Here we go again.

DANIEL: You spent years being told there was a right woman for you.

Your community.

Suitable family.

Professional.

Respectable.

Approved.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: And now you've found another right woman.

RAJ: This is different.

DANIEL: Is it?

RAJ: I chose her.

DANIEL: Did you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Or did you construct a list of everything missing from your life...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**and place it inside one woman?

*(**RAJ** stares at him.)*

RAJ: You're saying she could have been anyone.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: It sounds like it.

DANIEL: I'm saying she may be herself.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: And you may not yet have allowed her to be.

(RAJ is quiet.)

RAJ: What do I do?

DANIEL: About what?

RAJ: These feelings.

DANIEL: For today?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Nothing.

RAJ: Nothing?

DANIEL: Nothing.

RAJ: That's your professional advice?

DANIEL: No.

(A slight smile.)

DANIEL: It's an invitation.

RAJ: To do what?

DANIEL: Stop feeding them.

RAJ: How?

DANIEL: No enquiries.

No searches.

No asking friends.

No investigator.

No finding out what she had for breakfast through somebody's cousin.

(RAJ almost laughs.)

RAJ: I haven't gone that far.

DANIEL: Good. Save us both some time.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Let her disappear from your investigation.

RAJ: And then?

DANIEL: See what's left.

RAJ: What if what's left is love?

*(**DANIEL** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: Then perhaps one day we'll have to decide what you mean by that word.

*(**RAJ** sits with this.)*

Lights fade.

Blackout

SCENE FOUR

The therapy room.

A week or two later.

***RAJ** enters carrying more energy than usual. He sits, then immediately stands again.*

DANIEL: You seem pleased with yourself.

RAJ: I did something.

DANIEL: That could mean almost anything.

RAJ: I found a way forward.

DANIEL: Forward from where?

RAJ: From this.

DANIEL: This?

RAJ: Her.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: I spoke to someone.

DANIEL: You agreed not to make enquiries.

RAJ: This wasn't an enquiry.

DANIEL: What was it?

RAJ: A conversation.

DANIEL: With whom?

RAJ: A matchmaker.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: A matchmaker.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: For you?

RAJ: Obviously.

DANIEL: You're married.

RAJ: I know.

DANIEL: And she's married.

RAJ: I know that too.

DANIEL: Good. I was beginning to worry we'd lost some important details.

RAJ: Can you just listen?

DANIEL: I am.

*(**RAJ** sits.)*

RAJ: I told her the situation.

DANIEL: All of it?

RAJ: Enough.

DANIEL: Did you mention that the woman is your patient?

*(**RAJ** hesitates.)*

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Why not?

RAJ: Because it wasn't relevant.

DANIEL: You seem to have a very flexible definition of relevance.

RAJ: I knew you'd do this.

DANIEL: Then why tell me?

RAJ: Because I want you to understand.

DANIEL: Then help me.

(A pause.)

RAJ: The matchmaker knows her family.

DANIEL: Directly?

RAJ: Not exactly.

DANIEL: Of course.

RAJ: Through people.

DANIEL: The famous people.

RAJ: You mock it, but that's how communities work.

DANIEL: I'm not mocking the community.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: I'm wondering what you're asking it to do for you.

RAJ: I wanted to know if there was any possibility.

DANIEL: You said this wasn't an enquiry.

RAJ: Fine. It was an enquiry.

DANIEL: Thank you.

RAJ: Happy?

DANIEL: Not especially.

*(**RAJ** exhales.)*

RAJ: She knows the woman's uncle.

DANIEL: The matchmaker?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: She approached him.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: About what?

RAJ: Me.

DANIEL: As a marriage proposal?

RAJ: Yes.

(A longer silence.)

DANIEL: You sent a marriage proposal to the uncle of a married woman.

RAJ: When you say it like that...

DANIEL: How would you like me to say it?

RAJ: There was context.

DANIEL: I'm fascinated to hear it.

RAJ: Her husband isn't from our community.

DANIEL: He's French.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Still married, though?

RAJ: Don't be stupid.

DANIEL: I'm trying very hard not to be.

RAJ: I didn't mean that his marriage didn't count.

DANIEL: Then what did you mean?

RAJ: I thought her family might see things differently.

DANIEL: Differently how?

RAJ: You know.

DANIEL: I don't.

RAJ: That perhaps...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Perhaps what?

RAJ: That if she had married outside the community, maybe they weren't entirely happy with it.

DANIEL: And that would make her available?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then why would it matter?

*(**RAJ** struggles.)*

RAJ: I thought they might prefer...

DANIEL: You?

RAJ: Someone of our community.

DANIEL: Your community doctor.

RAJ: You're making it crude.

DANIEL: I'm making it clear.

(A pause.)

RAJ: The uncle was furious.

DANIEL: I'm not surprised.

RAJ: He called the whole thing absurd.

DANIEL: What else?

RAJ: He said she was happily married.

DANIEL: Did that surprise you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Disappoint you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: More honest.

(RAJ looks away.)

RAJ: He said her husband was a good man. That he had been part of the family for years.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: He thought it was insulting.

DANIEL: To whom?

RAJ: Her husband.

DANIEL: Only him?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: Perhaps her too.

RAJ: He didn't even tell her.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: That bothers you.

RAJ: Of course it bothers me.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because it should have been her decision.

*(**DANIEL** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: Her decision whether to consider marrying you.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: While married to somebody else.

RAJ: I'm saying she should have been asked.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because she's an adult.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Her uncle had no right to decide for her.

DANIEL: Agreed.

*(**RAJ** stops, slightly surprised.)*

RAJ: You agree?

DANIEL: Completely.

RAJ: Good.

DANIEL: I'm just wondering why you asked him.

(A silence.)

RAJ: Because that's how these things are done.

DANIEL: By whom?

RAJ: Families.

DANIEL: But this woman already has a family.

RAJ: That's not what I mean.

DANIEL: And she didn't ask you to involve hers.

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: You didn't ask her whether she wanted a proposal.

RAJ: I couldn't.

DANIEL: Because she's your patient.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: So instead of asking her...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**you asked another person to ask another person to decide whether she should be asked.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: When you say it like that, it sounds ridiculous.

DANIEL: Does it sound less ridiculous another way?

*(**RAJ** says nothing.)*

DANIEL: You told me something interesting a few weeks ago.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: You said you admired her because she made her own choices.

RAJ: I do.

DANIEL: Yet everyone in this story seems to be making choices around her.

RAJ: I wanted her to have the choice.

DANIEL: Eventually.

RAJ: What does that mean?

DANIEL: You chose to investigate her.

You chose to involve the matchmaker.

The matchmaker chose to approach the uncle.

The uncle chose to reject you.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: And the woman whose freedom you admire wasn't present for any of it.

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: I didn't want to put her in an awkward position.

DANIEL: So you put everyone else in it instead.

RAJ: I was trying to be respectful.

DANIEL: Respectful of what?

RAJ: Her family.

DANIEL: What about her?

(A silence.)

RAJ: I thought I was doing it properly.

DANIEL: Properly according to whom?

RAJ: According to how I was brought up.

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: Don't.

DANIEL: This time I think the "ah" is deserved.

*(**RAJ** rubs his forehead.)*

RAJ: I know how this looks.

DANIEL: I'm less interested in how it looks than in what it reveals.

RAJ: Which is?

DANIEL: You say your parents trapped you inside a system.

RAJ: They did.

DANIEL: And when you finally believe you've found the woman you truly want...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**you use the same system.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: That's different.

DANIEL: Is it?

RAJ: I wasn't forcing her.

DANIEL: Neither would your parents say they forced you.

RAJ: They did.

DANIEL: They'd probably say they were helping you make the right decision.

*(**RAJ** goes still.)*

DANIEL: Sound familiar?

RAJ: That's low.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because you know what they did to me.

DANIEL: I know what you've told me.

RAJ: Same thing.

DANIEL: Not always.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I'm not my father.

DANIEL: I didn't say you were.

RAJ: I'm not.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: He wanted obedience.

DANIEL: And what do you want?

RAJ: Love.

DANIEL: From her?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Does she owe you the opportunity to give it?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Does she owe you the opportunity to receive hers?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then what exactly were you asking the uncle for?

(RAJ opens his mouth.)

(Nothing comes.)

RAJ: A chance.

DANIEL: For you.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Not necessarily for her.

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: That's important.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: Do you know what made me angriest?

DANIEL: Tell me.

RAJ: He didn't even ask her.

DANIEL: You said.

RAJ: He just decided.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: As though her view didn't matter.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: As though he knew what was best for her.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: That's wrong.

DANIEL: Yes.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Were you asked?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: Asked what?

DANIEL: Fourteen years ago.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: Did anyone ask what you wanted?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did they assume they knew what was best for you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And what did that do to you?

RAJ: You know.

DANIEL: Say it.

RAJ: It made me feel invisible.

(A long pause.)

DANIEL: Where is she in this story, **RAJ**?

*(**RAJ**'s eyes lift.)*

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: The woman you say you love.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: Where is she?

RAJ: She's...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: The investigator speaks.

The matchmaker speaks.

The uncle speaks.

You speak.

I speak.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Where does she speak?

(RAJ says nothing.)

DANIEL: Perhaps that's worth thinking about.

(RAJ looks down.)

RAJ: It doesn't matter now.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: It's over.

DANIEL: The proposal?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And the feelings?

RAJ: No.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: That's the problem.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: Perhaps?

DANIEL: Maybe the feelings aren't the problem.

RAJ: Then what is?

DANIEL: What you believe they entitle you to do.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: So what now?

DANIEL: Nothing.

RAJ: Again?

DANIEL: Again.

RAJ: You're remarkably well paid for telling people to do nothing.

DANIEL: Doing nothing can be very difficult for people who desperately want reality to change.

(RAJ almost smiles.)

RAJ: I can't make her choose me.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: I can't even ask her.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: So that's it.

DANIEL: Maybe.

RAJ: You really enjoy that word.

DANIEL: It keeps doors open.

RAJ: There's no door left.

DANIEL: Not to her, perhaps.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: But there may be one to you.

(RAJ looks at him.)

Lights slowly fade.

Blackout

SCENE FIVE

The therapy room.

Another session.

***RAJ** is quieter today. No restless energy. No irritation.*

***DANIEL** waits.*

RAJ: I haven't done anything.

DANIEL: Congratulations.

RAJ: You don't have to sound surprised.

DANIEL: I'm not.

RAJ: No calls. No enquiries. Nothing.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: It's worse.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: At least before I was doing something.

DANIEL: Towards what?

RAJ: I don't know.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Hope, I suppose.

DANIEL: And now?

RAJ: There isn't any.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: The uncle was the end of it.

DANIEL: The end of what?

RAJ: Any possibility.

DANIEL: Was there ever one?

(RAJ looks at him.)

RAJ: Do you have to do that?

DANIEL: Do what?

RAJ: Take away even the bit that made me feel better.

DANIEL: Would you rather I helped you keep something alive that wasn't there?

RAJ: Sometimes.

DANIEL: Fair enough.

(A silence.)

RAJ: I miss her.

DANIEL: When did you last see her?

RAJ: Nearly three weeks ago.

DANIEL: At the surgery?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: How was she?

RAJ: Fine.

DANIEL: Did anything happen?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Anything unusual?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did she seem unhappy?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: With her husband?

RAJ: She didn't mention him.

DANIEL: Did she seem as though she needed rescuing?

RAJ: I never said she needed rescuing.

DANIEL: No.

(A pause.)

RAJ: But I think part of me wanted her to.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because then there would have been a reason.

DANIEL: For what?

RAJ: For all of this.

(He gestures vaguely towards himself.)

RAJ: For feeling like this.

For thinking about her.

For imagining...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Imagining what?

RAJ: A life.

DANIEL: With her.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Tell me about it.

RAJ: You already know.

DANIEL: I know you've imagined dinners and walks.

RAJ: It sounds ridiculous when you say it.

DANIEL: Then say it your way.

*(**RAJ** thinks.)*

RAJ: Peace.

DANIEL: Peace?

RAJ: That's what I imagine.

DANIEL: No arguments?

RAJ: Not that kind of peace.

DANIEL: What kind?

RAJ: Not having to explain myself all the time.

Not having to be someone's son.

Someone's husband.

Someone's father.

Someone's doctor.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Just being me.

DANIEL: And she gives you that?

RAJ: I think she would.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: Because she is...

(He searches.)

RAJ: Different.

DANIEL: Different from your wife?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: She's confident.

Independent.

She has opinions.

She's curious about things.

She reads.

She travels.

She doesn't seem frightened of anybody's judgement.

DANIEL: Your wife is frightened of judgement?

RAJ: She cares about what people think.

DANIEL: And you don't?

*(**RAJ** gives him a look.)*

RAJ: Apparently I do.

DANIEL: Quite a lot.

RAJ: Yes.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: What else?

RAJ: She has her own identity.

DANIEL: Your wife doesn't?

RAJ: I didn't say that.

DANIEL: She's a nurse.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: A mother.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: A daughter?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: A woman with a life before she met you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Then perhaps she has an identity too.

RAJ: I know she does.

DANIEL: Do you know what it is?

*(**RAJ** goes quiet.)*

RAJ: That's unfair.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because we've been married fourteen years.

DANIEL: That wasn't my question.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: What does your wife want from life?

RAJ: Her family matters to her.

DANIEL: That's what matters to you about her.

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then what matters to her?

*(**RAJ** struggles.)*

RAJ: She likes her work.

DANIEL: What does she like about it?

RAJ: Helping people.

DANIEL: Anything else?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: What frightened her when she was twenty?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: What did she want to become before she became a nurse?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: What does she regret?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: What makes her feel alive?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: I don't know.

(A long silence.)

DANIEL: You know more about your patient than you know about your wife.

RAJ: That's not fair either.

DANIEL: No.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: It's rather sad.

*(**RAJ** looks down.)*

RAJ: We stopped asking each other things.

DANIEL: When?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: Before the children?

RAJ: Maybe.

DANIEL: Before you married?

*(**RAJ** looks up.)*

RAJ: Maybe.

(A silence.)

RAJ: We never really had that.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: The part where you're fascinated by someone.

Where you want to know everything.

DANIEL: You certainly have that now.

RAJ: Yes.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: Perhaps too much of it.

(RAJ almost smiles.)

RAJ: I know.

(A quieter pause.)

RAJ: That's what hurts.

DANIEL: What does?

RAJ: I know what it feels like now.

DANIEL: To be fascinated?

RAJ: To want somebody.

Not because my parents approve.

Not because the family knows them.

Not because they're the right age or background or profession.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Just because I do.

DANIEL: And you're grieving that.

RAJ: I'm grieving her.

DANIEL: Are you?

(RAJ stiffens.)

RAJ: There you go.

DANIEL: I'm asking.

RAJ: She's the woman I should have married.

(Silence.)

DANIEL: Should have?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: When?

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: When should you have married her?

RAJ: If we'd met years ago.

DANIEL: She would have been nearly forty.

RAJ: So?

DANIEL: She may already have been married.

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I think I do.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: You don't mean this particular woman at a particular moment.

RAJ: Of course I do.

DANIEL: Do you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Or do you mean that you wish, at twenty-nine, you'd met someone who made you feel what she makes you feel now?

*(**RAJ** says nothing.)*

DANIEL: Someone you chose.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Someone who represented a life outside your parents' expectations.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Someone who made you brave enough to say no.

RAJ: Maybe.

DANIEL: Someone who would have rescued you from having to choose for yourself.

*(**RAJ** looks at him sharply.)*

RAJ: There it is again.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: You make everything my fault.

DANIEL: No.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: I'm trying to give you your life back.

RAJ: By blaming me for it?

DANIEL: By returning your choices to you.

RAJ: Some gift.

DANIEL: Responsibility usually is.

(A silence.)

RAJ: I was under enormous pressure.

DANIEL: I know.

RAJ: My mother cried. My father stopped speaking to me. Everyone behaved as if my unmarried state was some family emergency.

DANIEL: I know.

RAJ: And you're still saying I chose it.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Why does that matter so much to you?

DANIEL: Because otherwise this woman has become another version of your parents.

RAJ: That's absurd.

DANIEL: Is it?

RAJ: She hasn't asked me to do anything.

DANIEL: Exactly.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Yet you've given her the power to change your life.

RAJ: Because I love her.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: There it is.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: "Perhaps."

DANIEL: You don't like uncertainty.

RAJ: Not about this.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because if I don't love her...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Then?

RAJ: Then what the hell have I done?

(A silence.)

RAJ: The investigator.

The matchmaker.

Her uncle.

Thinking about her every day.

Looking at my wife and wishing...

(He stops again.)

DANIEL: Wishing what?

RAJ: That she were someone else.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: If it isn't love, then I'm just...

DANIEL: Just what?

RAJ: Pathetic.

DANIEL: That's quite a leap.

RAJ: Is it?

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Then what is it?

DANIEL: I don't know yet.

RAJ: You're the therapist.

DANIEL: Unfortunately that doesn't make me God.

RAJ: Could have fooled me.

(DANIEL smiles.)

DANIEL: Let's try something.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: Suppose she'd never walked into your surgery.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: No patient. No beautiful woman. No French husband. No investigator. No proposal.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Would you have been happy?

*(**RAJ** says nothing.)*

DANIEL: **RAJ**?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: Try.

RAJ: I was managing.

DANIEL: That's not happiness.

RAJ: Most people manage.

DANIEL: Also not happiness.

RAJ: What do you want me to say?

DANIEL: Whatever is true.

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: No what?

RAJ: I wasn't happy.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: Before her.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: So she didn't make you unhappy.

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: She showed you.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

(A long pause.)

RAJ: That's worse.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I can't blame her either.

DANIEL: You seem very keen to find somebody.

RAJ: My parents...

DANIEL: Played their part.

RAJ: A very large part.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: My wife...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: What about her?

RAJ: Nothing.

DANIEL: Good.

(A pause.)

RAJ: She didn't do anything.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: That's the problem.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because it would be easier if she had.

DANIEL: If your wife were cruel?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Unfaithful?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Neglectful?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Then you could leave and feel righteous.

RAJ: Exactly.

*(**RAJ** immediately realises what he has said.)*

RAJ: God.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: That's horrible.

DANIEL: It's honest.

RAJ: I've actually wished for something to be wrong with her.

DANIEL: Because then you wouldn't have to face the fact that sometimes nobody is the villain.

*(**RAJ** is quiet.)*

RAJ: So what is she?

DANIEL: Your wife?

RAJ: No.

(A pause.)

RAJ: The patient.

DANIEL: She's a woman.

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I think that's important.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: She is a woman.

Not an answer.

Not an escape.

Not the reward you receive for surviving the wrong marriage.

Not proof that another life was waiting for you.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: A woman.

With a husband.

Children.

Memories you weren't there for.

Choices she made without you.

A life already in progress.

*(**RAJ**'s eyes lower.)*

RAJ: I know.

DANIEL: Do you?

RAJ: I'm beginning to.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: What do you love most about her?

RAJ: Her freedom.

DANIEL: Tell me.

RAJ: She's just herself.

She doesn't apologise for it.

She married someone outside the community because she wanted to.

She built her own career.

Raised her children.

She doesn't seem to be waiting for anyone's permission.

DANIEL: And when you look at her?

RAJ: I think...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: I think that's how life could have been.

(A very long silence.)

DANIEL: There you are.

RAJ: Where?

DANIEL: Not with her.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: With you.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: Perhaps you're not only grieving a woman you cannot have.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: Perhaps you're grieving the life you didn't choose.

*(**RAJ** sits completely still.)*

RAJ: That's not fair.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: I mean life isn't fair.

DANIEL: Rarely.

RAJ: You can't give somebody a glimpse of another life and then...

(He breaks off.)

DANIEL: Then what?

RAJ: Take it away.

DANIEL: Who gave it to you?

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: She did.

DANIEL: Did she?

RAJ: She walked into my surgery.

DANIEL: She came to see her GP.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Everything after that happened inside you.

*(**RAJ**'s eyes fill. He looks away.)*

RAJ: I really thought she was the answer.

DANIEL: Perhaps she was a question.

*(**RAJ** looks back at him.)*

RAJ: What question?

DANIEL: Are you going to spend the rest of your life believing the life you wanted belonged to somebody else?

(A long silence.)

RAJ: I don't know what to do with that.

DANIEL: You don't have to do anything with it today.

RAJ: More doing nothing.

DANIEL: You're getting very good at it.

*(**RAJ** laughs through the emotion.)*

RAJ: Idiot.

DANIEL: Probably.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I still love her.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: You're not going to argue?

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Why?

DANIEL: Because perhaps the next question isn't whether you love her.

*(**RAJ** waits.)*

DANIEL: Perhaps it's what love asks of you.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

Lights slowly fade.

Blackout

SCENE SIX

The therapy room.

Some days later.

***RAJ** sits quietly. He looks tired, but less agitated than before.*

***DANIEL** waits.*

RAJ: I've been thinking about what you said.

DANIEL: Dangerous habit.

RAJ: About love.

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: You can use it this time.

DANIEL: Thank you.

(A pause.)

RAJ: You said the question wasn't whether I loved her.

DANIEL: I remember.

RAJ: You said the question was what love asks of me.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: So?

DANIEL: So what?

RAJ: What does it ask?

DANIEL: You want me to tell you?

RAJ: That's generally why people come here.

DANIEL: I thought people came here because nobody else will listen to them for fifty minutes.

RAJ: I'm serious.

DANIEL: So am I.

(A pause.)

RAJ: What is love?

DANIEL: That's rather ambitious for a Tuesday afternoon.

RAJ: You know what I mean.

DANIEL: I'm not sure anyone does.

RAJ: You must have an opinion.

DANIEL: I have several. They frequently disagree.

RAJ: Useful.

DANIEL: Sometimes.

(RAJ leans forward.)

RAJ: I want to know whether what I feel is love.

DANIEL: Why does the label matter?

RAJ: Because love means something.

DANIEL: Such as?

RAJ: That it's real.

DANIEL: Pain is real.

Fear is real.

Jealousy is real.

Loneliness is real.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Real doesn't necessarily mean love.

RAJ: I know that.

DANIEL: Do you?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Then tell me what love means to you.

*(**RAJ** thinks.)*

RAJ: Wanting to be with someone.

DANIEL: That's desire.

RAJ: It's more than desire.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: Wanting to share your life with them.

DANIEL: That could be companionship.

RAJ: Wanting them.

DANIEL: We're back to desire.

RAJ: You make everything sound clinical.

DANIEL: You're the doctor.

RAJ: Fine.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Love is when someone matters more than anyone else.

DANIEL: More than your children?

RAJ: That's different.

DANIEL: Then we're already discovering there isn't only one kind.

RAJ: I'm talking about romantic love.

DANIEL: All right.

RAJ: When you can't imagine your life without someone.

DANIEL: You have imagined almost your entire life with this woman.

RAJ: Exactly.

DANIEL: She hasn't imagined any of it with you.

*(**RAJ**'s expression changes.)*

RAJ: You always do that.

DANIEL: Do what?

RAJ: Bring her reality into it.

DANIEL: Love probably should.

(A silence.)

RAJ: All right.

DANIEL: All right what?

RAJ: Teach me.

DANIEL: I don't teach.

RAJ: Pretend.

DANIEL: That sounds like something you've already been doing rather well.

*(**RAJ** gives him a look.)*

RAJ: **DANIEL**.

DANIEL: All right.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Imagine someone you love.

RAJ: Her?

DANIEL: Anyone.

RAJ: My daughter.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: Why her?

DANIEL: You chose her.

RAJ: All right.

DANIEL: What do you want for her?

RAJ: Everything.

DANIEL: Be more specific.

RAJ: I want her to be happy.

Safe.

Healthy.

Successful.

DANIEL: Married?

*(**RAJ** hesitates.)*

RAJ: If she wants to be.

DANIEL: To whom?

RAJ: Whoever she chooses.

DANIEL: Your community?

RAJ: Doesn't matter.

DANIEL: Indian?

RAJ: Doesn't matter.

DANIEL: Someone your parents approve of?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Someone you approve of?

RAJ: I'd like to approve.

DANIEL: And if you didn't?

*(**RAJ** thinks.)*

RAJ: I'd have to accept it.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because it's her life.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Even if watching her choose made you unhappy?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Even if you believed she was making a mistake?

RAJ: I'd tell her what I thought.

DANIEL: And then?

RAJ: Let her decide.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I love her.

(Silence.)

*(**RAJ** hears himself.)*

DANIEL: Interesting.

RAJ: You did that deliberately.

DANIEL: I barely did anything.

RAJ: You knew where it was going.

DANIEL: Did you?

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

DANIEL: You love your daughter enough to allow her a life that may not include your approval.

RAJ: She's my child.

DANIEL: Exactly.

RAJ: That's different.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Or perhaps love contains the same strange problem everywhere.

RAJ: Which is?

DANIEL: The person you love does not belong to you.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: Not your daughter.

Not your wife.

Not your patient.

Not anyone.

(A silence.)

RAJ: Of course people don't belong to each other.

DANIEL: You know that intellectually.

RAJ: And otherwise?

DANIEL: You hired a private investigator.

RAJ: We're back to that.

DANIEL: Only because you keep bringing love into the same room.

RAJ: I was desperate.

DANIEL: I know.

RAJ: I wanted a chance.

DANIEL: I know.

RAJ: I wasn't trying to own her.

DANIEL: Perhaps not consciously.

RAJ: Then what was I doing?

DANIEL: Trying to make reality give you what you wanted.

RAJ: Isn't that what everybody does?

DANIEL: Quite often.

RAJ: Then why is mine so terrible?

DANIEL: I didn't say terrible.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: But there is a difference between wanting someone...

and believing your wanting creates an obligation in them.

RAJ: I never said she was obliged.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: I just wanted her to know.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because maybe she felt the same.

DANIEL: And if she didn't?

RAJ: Then at least I'd know.

DANIEL: You already know something.

RAJ: What?

DANIEL: She has not invited you into her life.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Because she doesn't know.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: So how can you say that?

DANIEL: Because invitation isn't simply the absence of refusal.

*(**RAJ** goes quiet.)*

DANIEL: Sometimes we mistake silence for possibility because possibility hurts less than reality.

RAJ: And what's reality?

DANIEL: She is married.

She has a life.

She came to you for medical care.

She has not asked you to change any of that.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: So I'm supposed to switch it off.

DANIEL: Can you?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then probably not.

RAJ: What am I supposed to do with it?

DANIEL: Feel it.

RAJ: That's your answer?

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Just feel miserable?

DANIEL: You seem to believe every feeling requires action.

RAJ: Doesn't it?

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Then what's the point of feeling anything?

DANIEL: Who told you feelings needed a point?

*(**RAJ** stares at him.)*

DANIEL: You can be angry without hitting anyone.

You can be afraid without running.

You can be sad without fixing sadness.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Perhaps you can love without possessing.

RAJ: Possessing.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: That's an ugly word.

DANIEL: Only when we pretend it isn't there.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I don't want to possess her.

DANIEL: What do you want?

RAJ: To be with her.

DANIEL: On whose terms?

RAJ: Both of ours.

DANIEL: But there are no "both" yet.

*(**RAJ** closes his eyes briefly.)*

RAJ: You make everything impossible.

DANIEL: I suspect reality did that before I arrived.

(A silence.)

RAJ: All right.

DANIEL: All right?

RAJ: Suppose I accept that.

DANIEL: You don't have to accept anything for my sake.

RAJ: Suppose I do.

(A pause.)

RAJ: What does love look like if I can't be with her?

DANIEL: Maybe exactly like that.

RAJ: Like what?

DANIEL: Not being with her.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: That's ridiculous.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because love brings people together.

DANIEL: Sometimes.

RAJ: That's what love does.

DANIEL: Sometimes love leaves people alone.

(A silence.)

RAJ: That sounds like giving up.

DANIEL: Only if you think love is a campaign.

RAJ: So I just walk away.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: And that's love?

DANIEL: It could be.

RAJ: How?

*(**DANIEL** takes a moment.)*

DANIEL: You told me the thing you admire most about her is that she is free.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Then let her be free.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

RAJ: She is free.

DANIEL: Not in your mind.

RAJ: What does that mean?

DANIEL: In your mind she's waiting to discover you.

She's living the wrong life.

Married to the wrong man.

Only one conversation away from recognising that you are what she really needs.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: That's not freedom.

RAJ: It's fantasy.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: I'm allowed to fantasise.

DANIEL: Of course.

RAJ: Then what's the problem?

DANIEL: The problem begins when fantasy starts making claims on reality.

*(**RAJ** falls silent.)*

DANIEL: Maybe loving her means allowing her life to remain exactly what she has chosen it to be.

RAJ: Even if I think we'd be happier together?

DANIEL: Especially then.

RAJ: Why?

DANIEL: Because otherwise you're not loving her freedom.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: You're loving the possibility that she'll use it to choose you.

*(**RAJ** looks stricken.)*

RAJ: That's harsh.

DANIEL: Is it untrue?

*(**RAJ** doesn't answer.)*

DANIEL: Suppose she never knows.

RAJ: About me?

DANIEL: About any of this.

RAJ: Then I carry it alone.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: For what?

DANIEL: Why must she carry some of it?

(Silence.)

RAJ: Because...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Because?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: If telling her would disturb her marriage, alter how she sees her doctor, make her question every consultation...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: **...**who would the confession really be for?

RAJ: Me.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: So I don't tell her.

DANIEL: That's for you to decide.

RAJ: No. You're telling me not to.

DANIEL: I'm asking you to notice who benefits.

*(**RAJ** sits back.)*

RAJ: You know what's strange?

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: My whole life I've hated the fact that other people decided what was best for me.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: And I've spent months deciding what would be best for her.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: I thought her husband was wrong for her because he wasn't...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Your community?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And you?

RAJ: Right background.

Right profession.

Right family.

(A bitter smile.)

RAJ: I turned myself into a bloody marriage biodata.

DANIEL: Efficient.

*(**RAJ** laughs unexpectedly.)*

RAJ: You're terrible.

DANIEL: Frequently.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I really thought I was being different from my parents.

DANIEL: Perhaps you are.

RAJ: How?

DANIEL: You're noticing.

(That lands.)

RAJ: Is that enough?

DANIEL: For today.

(A silence.)

RAJ: Say it plainly.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: What you think love is.

DANIEL: You really want a definition?

RAJ: Yes.

*(**DANIEL** considers him.)*

DANIEL: All right.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Maybe love is wanting to see another person happy.
Perhaps love is wanting them to be fully themselves…
even when who they are does not include you.

*(**RAJ**'s eyes remain on him.)*

DANIEL: Perhaps love is being able to say...

(A pause.)

DANIEL: "Your life is yours."

RAJ: Even if it hurts.

DANIEL: Especially if it hurts.

RAJ: And that's it?

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: What else?

DANIEL: You stop turning the pain into a reason to interfere.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: So if I love her...

DANIEL: Yes?

RAJ: **...**I leave her alone.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: That's what you're saying.

DANIEL: What are you saying?

*(**RAJ** looks down at his hands.)*

RAJ: That I leave her alone.

(A long pause.)

RAJ: No investigator.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: No matchmaker.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: No uncle.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: No message.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Nothing.

DANIEL: Nothing.

*(**RAJ** looks up.)*

RAJ: And if she never knows I loved her?

DANIEL: Would the love become less real?

*(**RAJ** thinks.)*

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Then perhaps it doesn't need an audience.

(A silence.)

(RAJ's eyes fill, but he does not look away.)

RAJ: I don't know if I can do it.

DANIEL: You don't have to know.

RAJ: Then what do I have to do?

DANIEL: Today?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Nothing.

*(**RAJ** laughs quietly through his tears.)*

RAJ: You always come back to that.

DANIEL: It's surprisingly difficult.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I suppose I thought letting her go meant admitting I was wrong about her.

DANIEL: Maybe you were wrong about what she was for.

RAJ: What was she for?

DANIEL: Perhaps she wasn't for anything.

(A beat.)

DANIEL: Perhaps she was simply living her life.

*(**RAJ** absorbs this.)*

RAJ: And I walked into it.

DANIEL: No.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: She walked into yours.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

DANIEL: And something woke up.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: Me.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

(RAJ takes a slow breath.)

RAJ: Then maybe I don't need her to come with me.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: Maybe I just need to go.

DANIEL: Where?

*(**RAJ** gives the faintest smile.)*

RAJ: I don't know yet.

Lights slowly fade.

Blackout

SCENE SEVEN

The therapy room.

Several weeks later.

***RAJ** sits differently now. Not relaxed exactly, but no longer carrying the same urgency.*

***DANIEL** notices.*

DANIEL: You look well.

RAJ: Careful.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: You'll ruin your reputation.

DANIEL: I'll risk it.

(A small smile.)

RAJ: I transferred her.

DANIEL: To another doctor?

RAJ: Yes.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: How did that feel?

RAJ: Awful.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: There he is.

DANIEL: Sorry.

RAJ: No, you're not.

DANIEL: No.

*(**RAJ** smiles.)*

RAJ: I told the practice manager that because of a personal conflict I shouldn't continue treating her.

DANIEL: Did you explain?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: Did she ask?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: And the patient?

RAJ: She was told she'd be seeing another GP.

DANIEL: How did she react?

RAJ: I don't know.

DANIEL: You didn't find out?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: No enquiries?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: No helpful cousin of somebody's aunt?

RAJ: Nothing.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: That sounds difficult.

RAJ: It was.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: It still is.

*(**DANIEL** waits.)*

RAJ: I thought something dramatic would happen.

DANIEL: When?

RAJ: When I finally let go.

DANIEL: Fireworks?

RAJ: Something.

DANIEL: Trumpets?

RAJ: Maybe one trumpet.

DANIEL: Budget cuts.

*(**RAJ** laughs.)*

RAJ: Instead I went home.

DANIEL: How disappointing.

RAJ: Exactly.

(A pause.)

RAJ: My mother was in the kitchen.

My father was watching the news.

My son was shouting at some game upstairs.

My daughter was arguing with my wife about her phone.

DANIEL: Life.

RAJ: Apparently.

DANIEL: Did it look different?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: Smaller.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Then bigger.

DANIEL: That's inconvenient.

RAJ: Everything's inconvenient with you.

(Silence.)

RAJ: I looked at my wife.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: Really looked at her.

(A pause.)

RAJ: She was tired.

DANIEL: After work?

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Had you not noticed before?

RAJ: I'd noticed she was tired.

DANIEL: That's different?

RAJ: Very.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I knew the fact.

I hadn't wondered what it felt like.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: She'd done a twelve-hour shift.

Come home.

Checked our daughter's homework.

Made sure my father had taken his tablets.

Then she was standing in the kitchen asking what everyone wanted for dinner.

DANIEL: And what did you want?

RAJ: I don't know.

(A beat.)

RAJ: That's the first time I thought about it.

DANIEL: About dinner?

RAJ: About her.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: Fourteen years.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: I've spent fourteen years telling myself that I was trapped.

DANIEL: Were you?

RAJ: Sometimes.

(A pause.)

RAJ: But so was she.

(DANIEL waits.)

RAJ: She married a doctor from a respectable family.

Moved into his parents' house.

Had two children.

Worked.

Helped look after everyone.

And all this time...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: All this time?

RAJ: I was privately resenting her for being the woman I married.

(A silence.)

RAJ: She didn't force me.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: She didn't pressure me.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: She believed I wanted her.

(A long pause.)

RAJ: Because I said yes.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: God.

*(**RAJ** looks away.)*

RAJ: Do you know what she said to me the other night?

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: She asked if I was all right.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: I said yes.

DANIEL: Of course.

RAJ: Then she said...

(A pause.)

RAJ: "You've been somewhere else for months."

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: She knew.

DANIEL: Not necessarily what.

RAJ: No.

But she knew I wasn't there.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: What did you say?

RAJ: Nothing useful.

DANIEL: Such as?

RAJ: Work stress.

DANIEL: Reliable.

RAJ: Very.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Then she looked at me and said...

(He struggles.)

RAJ: "Raj, I have lived with you for fourteen years. Don't insult me."

*(**DANIEL** almost smiles.)*

DANIEL: I think I like your wife.

RAJ: You would.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: What happened?

RAJ: I told her I hadn't been happy.

DANIEL: All fourteen years?

RAJ: I didn't say that.

DANIEL: Why not?

RAJ: Because I don't think it's true any more.

*(**DANIEL** watches him.)*

RAJ: I think I've rewritten the marriage.

DANIEL: How?

RAJ: Made it fourteen years of misery because that made everything with the patient feel...

(He searches.)

RAJ: Necessary.

DANIEL: Ah.

RAJ: Yes. That one deserves it.

(A pause.)

RAJ: There were good years.

Good days.

The children being born.

Holidays.

Stupid jokes.

Sitting up at two in the morning when our daughter had a temperature.

My wife asleep on my shoulder on the flight back from India.

(A faint smile.)

RAJ: She snores.

DANIEL: A serious marital defect.

RAJ: Terrible.

(The smile disappears slowly.)

RAJ: I had forgotten all of it.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because if my marriage had contained anything good...

(A pause.)

RAJ: **...**then I couldn't pretend someone else had stolen my life.

(Silence.)

DANIEL: And now?

RAJ: I don't know what my marriage is.

DANIEL: That's honest.

RAJ: Is it enough?

DANIEL: For what?

RAJ: Fourteen years.

Two children.

A woman who thought I chose her.

DANIEL: You did choose her.

RAJ: Under pressure.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: You're not going to let me forget that distinction, are you?

DANIEL: I think both parts matter.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: You were pressured.

And you chose.

RAJ: Both.

DANIEL: Both.

*(**RAJ** nods slowly.)*

RAJ: I told my wife we need to talk properly.

DANIEL: About the patient?

RAJ: I don't know yet.

DANIEL: Why not?

RAJ: Because telling her everything might just be another way of making somebody else carry what I've done.

*(**DANIEL** looks at him carefully.)*

RAJ: You taught me that.

DANIEL: Did I?

RAJ: Don't ruin it.

(A small silence.)

RAJ: But I do owe her honesty about us.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: Not promises.

Not "everything's fine."

Not staying because my parents would be devastated if we separated.

Not leaving because I think another woman represents freedom.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Just the truth.

DANIEL: Which is?

RAJ: I don't know whether I love my wife.

DANIEL: That's difficult.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: I don't know whether she loves me.

DANIEL: Have you ever asked?

RAJ: No.

DANIEL: There's an idea.

RAJ: Fourteen years late.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I asked my daughter something.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: What she wants to do when she's older.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: She said she wants to live in New York.

DANIEL: Does she?

RAJ: Apparently.

DANIEL: How did that make you feel?

RAJ: Terrible.

DANIEL: Excellent.

RAJ: You really need new material.

(A pause.)

RAJ: My first thought was, "Absolutely not."

DANIEL: Naturally.

RAJ: Then I heard my father's voice.

(Silence.)

RAJ: Not literally.

DANIEL: Good.

RAJ: And I thought...

(A pause.)

RAJ: There it is.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: The whole thing.

Starting again.

(A long silence.)

RAJ: So I asked her why New York.

DANIEL: What did she say?

RAJ: She doesn't know.

She's now thirteen.

DANIEL: Very inconsiderate.

RAJ: She said it looks exciting.

*(**RAJ** smiles.)*

RAJ: So I said, "Maybe one day."

DANIEL: How did that feel?

RAJ: Like swallowing glass.

DANIEL: That dramatic?

RAJ: I'm Desi.

DANIEL: Fair.

(They share a brief laugh.)

(Then quiet.)

RAJ: I still think about her.

DANIEL: The patient.

RAJ: Yes.

DANIEL: Often?

RAJ: Every day.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: Does that worry you?

RAJ: Less.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because I don't have to do anything about it.

*(**DANIEL** nods.)*

RAJ: That's new.

DANIEL: Doing nothing.

RAJ: Your life's work.

DANIEL: Finally appreciated.

(A pause.)

RAJ: Sometimes I imagine seeing her somewhere years from now.

DANIEL: And?

RAJ: She's with her husband.

Maybe grandchildren by then.

She's laughing.

DANIEL: And where are you?

RAJ: Doesn't matter.

DANIEL: Really?

RAJ: I'm getting there.

(A silence.)

RAJ: I used to imagine she'd look at me and realise.

DANIEL: Realise what?

RAJ: That she should have chosen me.

DANIEL: And now?

RAJ: Now I try to imagine that she doesn't notice me at all.

*(**DANIEL** watches him.)*

RAJ: And she's happy.

(A long pause.)

DANIEL: How does that feel?

RAJ: Painful.

(A beat.)

RAJ: But clean.

DANIEL: Clean?

RAJ: There's nothing for her to do.

Nothing she has to understand.

Nothing she has to give me.

(A pause.)

RAJ: She's just allowed to be happy.

*(**DANIEL** says nothing.)*

RAJ: Is that love?

DANIEL: Why do you still need me to name it?

*(**RAJ** thinks.)*

RAJ: I don't.

(A quiet silence.)

RAJ: I think I understand now.

DANIEL: What?

RAJ: I thought letting her go meant I had to stop loving her.

(A pause.)

RAJ: But maybe letting her go is...

(He stops.)

DANIEL: Is?

RAJ: Letting the love belong to me.

Not to her.

*(**DANIEL** remains silent.)*

RAJ: She doesn't have to carry it.

She doesn't have to answer it.

She doesn't even have to know it exists.

(A long pause.)

RAJ: Her life is hers.

DANIEL: Yes.

RAJ: And mine is mine.

DANIEL: Yes.

*(**RAJ** smiles faintly.)*

RAJ: That's the frightening part.

DANIEL: Why?

RAJ: Because now I can't blame anyone for what I do next.

(A silence.)

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Not my parents.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Not my wife.

DANIEL: No.

RAJ: Not her.

DANIEL: No.

*(**RAJ** looks around the room.)*

RAJ: You really haven't fixed anything.

DANIEL: I did warn you.

RAJ: My marriage is still uncertain.

My parents are still my parents.

My children still need me.

I still don't know what I want half the time.

DANIEL: Sounds terrible.

RAJ: And somehow...

(A pause.)

RAJ: I feel lighter.

DANIEL: Interesting.

RAJ: Don't analyse it.

DANIEL: Wouldn't dream of it.

(A silence.)

RAJ: Do you think I'll ever stop thinking about her?

DANIEL: Probably.

RAJ: Probably?

DANIEL: Or you won't.

RAJ: Very reassuring.

DANIEL: Does it matter?

(RAJ considers this for a long moment.)

RAJ: No.

(A pause.)

RAJ: I suppose that's the point.

*(**RAJ** stands.)*

(He starts towards the door, then stops.)

RAJ: **DANIEL.**

DANIEL: Yes?

RAJ: If you love somebody...

(He hesitates.)

RAJ: **...**you let them be free.

DANIEL: Perhaps.

RAJ: You really can't just agree once, can you?

DANIEL: Where would be the fun in that?

*(**RAJ** smiles.)*

RAJ: I'll see you next week.

DANIEL: If you choose to.

*(**RAJ** looks at him.)*

(A beat.)

RAJ: I will.

*(**RAJ** exits.*

***DANIEL** remains seated.*

The empty chair opposite him.

Lights begin to fade.

*Then, from outside the room, **RAJ**'s voice.)*

RAJ: **DANIEL**?

DANIEL: Yes?

RAJ: Thank you.

(A pause.)

DANIEL: For what?

(Another pause.)

RAJ: For not telling me what to do.

*(**DANIEL** smiles.)*

Blackout.

THE END